

**Iowa Finance Authority  
Section 8 Contract Administration**

**2003 Customer Service Survey Results**

## Introduction

The survey was electronically mailed to owners, management agents, and property managers on September 3, 2003. The survey was also posted the same day on the IFA website under “Section 8 Contract Administration”. The survey return deadline was September 15, 2003.

The survey included questions regarding specific core tasks, namely management and occupancy reviews, rental adjustments, and voucher processing. It also included other topics such as training, communication as well as overall satisfaction of the division’s work.

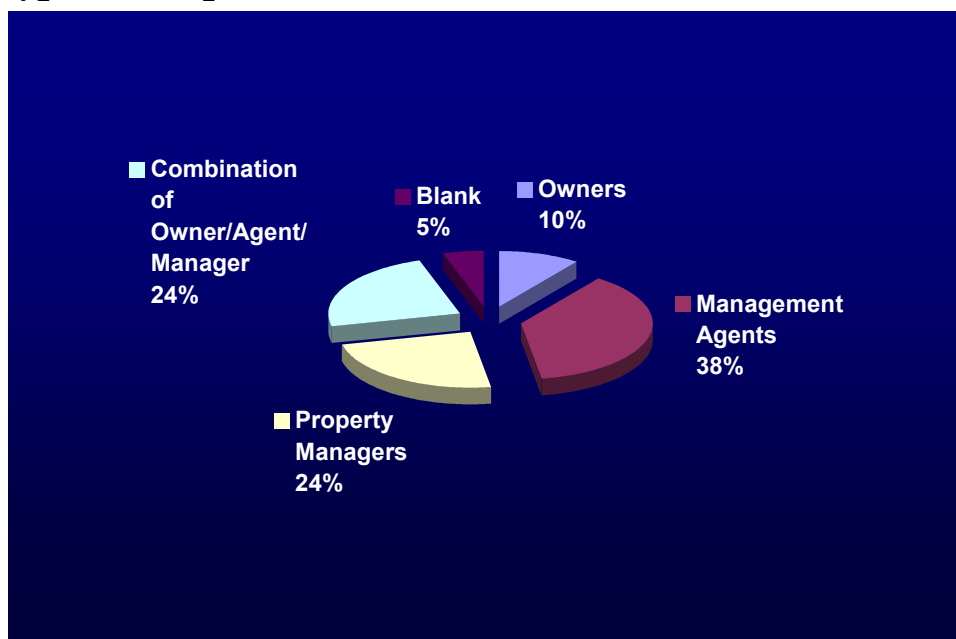
One hundred sixteen surveys were electronically mailed to various individuals. Approximately 20% of surveys were returned. This number increased from the previous year’s survey return of 10% as initially expected. The 2002 survey was one of the first mass e-mail correspondence sent to property contacts, and we believe the low return rate was directly related to unfamiliarity with this correspondence from the Section 8 Contract Administration Division. We believe regular correspondence from the division will encourage owners, management agents, and property managers to use the website to update our database when they have a change of internet providers.

## General Information

10% of survey respondents were owners, 38% were management agents, and 24% were property managers, with 24% claiming status as a combination of owner/agent/property manager. The remaining 5% left this category blank. These particular results have remained relatively stable over the past three years.

57% of returned surveys contained the owner/management agent/property manager’s name. Respondents who listed a name received an acknowledgement by e-mail.

## Types of Respondents



## Management and Occupancy Review

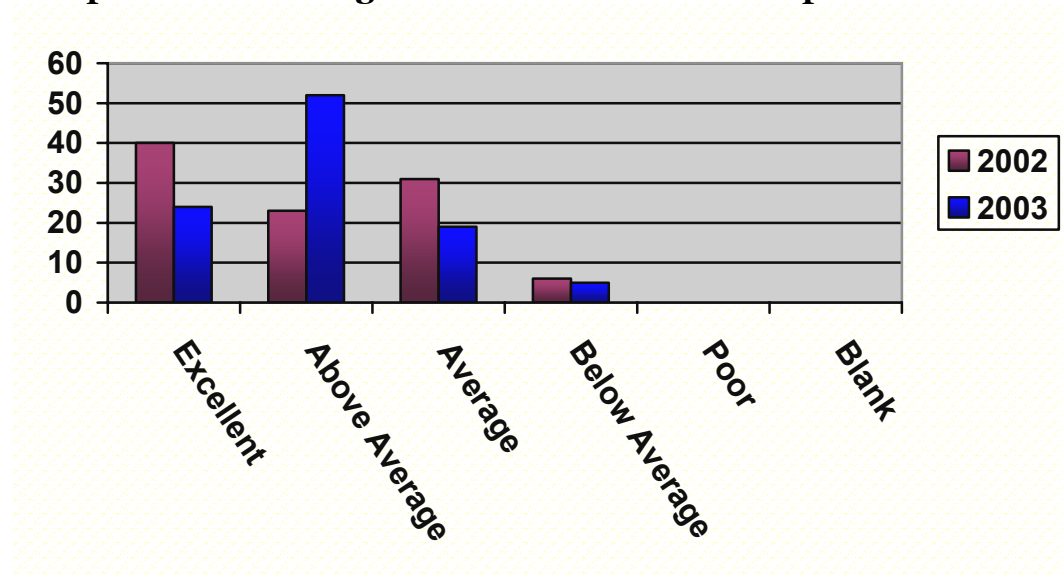
95% of respondents stated they participated in a Management and Occupancy Review in the past year. 5% left the question blank.

100% of respondents stated that IFA staff was courteous and professional when conducting management and occupancy reviews. This figure remains the same as 2002 figures.

86% believed IFA staff was informed of current HUD regulation and were able to answer questions appropriately compared to 89% in 2002. 10% said staff was not informed of current HUD regulations, 6% said no in 2002. 5% left the question blank.

24% of owners/agents/property managers rated the management review process as excellent in 2003, down from 40% in 2002. 52% rated the management review process above average compared to 23% in 2002. 19% rated the process as average, down from 31% the previous year. 5% rated the process below average down from 6% the previous year. 0% ranked the process as poor for two years.

### Comparison of Management Review Overall Response



Comments or suggestions to improve the quality and delivery of Management and Occupancy reviews included the following:

*“Stop changing policies at your convenience. Policies have been changing on a monthly basis since the new handbook. If we are to be consistent, so should IFA.”*

*“Tell us the specific documents you want so we don’t spend time copying unnecessary items. If you have rules on how we are to do things, send them to us.”*

*“She was very helpful and courteous.”*

*“Brian Sullivan is excellent is assisting us.”*

*“While knowledgeable of the technical aspects of the HUD requirements, the staff seems to have little experience with resident relations.”*

*“Remove the performance based pressure surrounding each review and team to improve the quality of performance and knowledge base for the property manager and management company as a whole.”*

*“During the management reviews I have sometimes felt that IFA staff was more interested in finding mistakes than in providing guidance to our staff.”*

*“If materials are in the file and copies are provided to reviewer on the day of the review-or faxed the next day, do they need to appear on the review anyway? They were in the file, just missed by reviewer. Frequent.”*

## **Rental Adjustments**

76% of respondents stated they had requested a rent increase in the past year. 19% stated they had not requested a rent increase. 5% left the question unanswered.

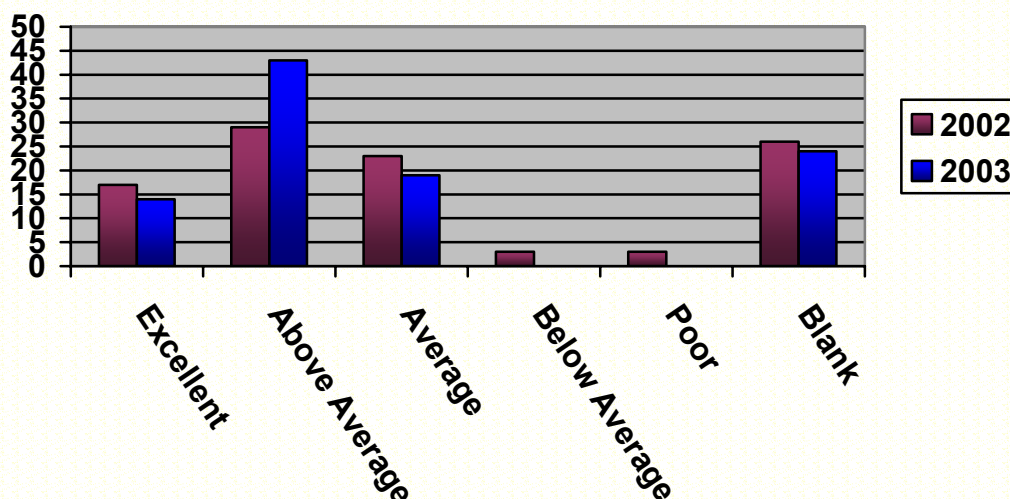
76% of respondents stated that the IFA staff was courteous and professional when submitting rental adjustment requests. 24% of respondents left the question blank. 0% believed the IFA staff was not courteous.

67% of owners/agents/property managers believe the IFA staff is informed of current HUD regulation and are able to provide appropriate answers to questions regarding rental adjustments compared to 63% in 2002. 5% did not feel IFA staff was informed of current HUD regulations, nor provide appropriate answers (6% in 2002). 29% left the question blank.

57% of those responding stated the IFA staff provided them with technical assistance. 10% said no, 33% left the question blank. These figures remain stable compared to the prior year.

Overall on a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being excellent, 4 above average, 3 average, 2 below average and 1 poor, 14% of respondents (17% in 2002) ranked the current rental adjustment process as excellent, 43% rated the process a 4, a significant increase compared to 29% the prior year, 19% (23% in 2002) deemed the process average, with 0% marking the process as below average or poor (6% in 2002). 24% of respondents left the question blank.

## **Comparison of Rental Adjustment Overall Response**



Comments received included:

*“This was a bit confusing as we have never done it before, but all went well.”*

*“Two rent increase attempts before anyone mentioned notice requirement to tenants, causing yet another delay.”*

*“There is nothing smooth about a rent increase. It is more bother than what it is worth for the owners. Can’t understand when requesting a rent increase it doesn’t happen. Only fix is to take from Residual Receipts account. After that, then what?”*

## **Contract Renewals**

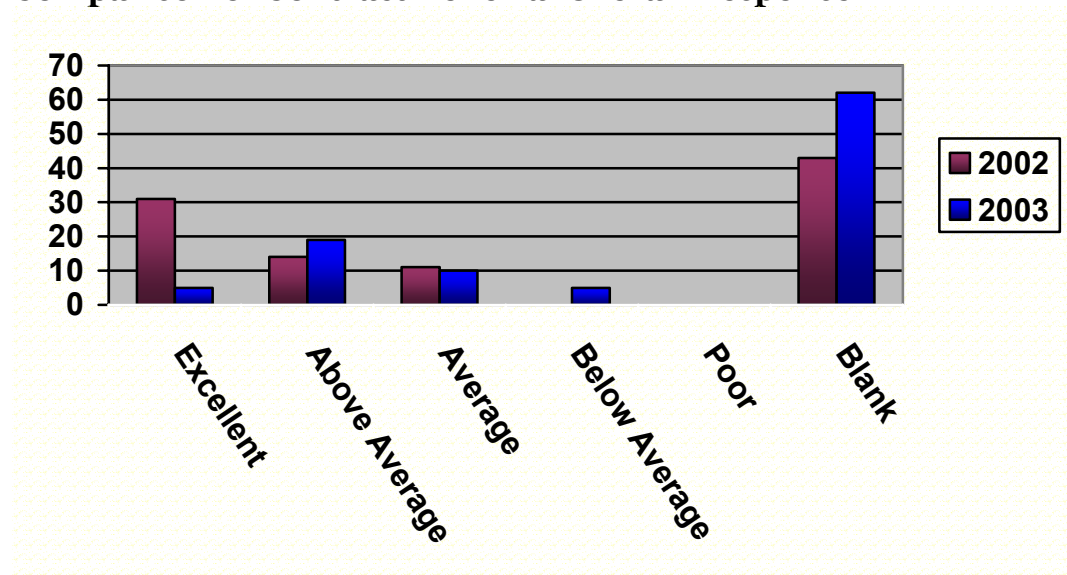
38% of respondents had actually worked with the contract renewal staff in the past year. 57% had not yet experienced the contract renewal process. 5% left the question blank.

38% of responses received felt the IFA staff conducting the contract renewal process was courteous and professional. 0% believed the staff was unprofessional, 62% left the question blank.

33% believed the IFA contract renewal team was informed of HUD regulations and were able to answer questions appropriately. 5% said no, 62% left the question blank.

When asked about the renewal process on a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being excellent, 4 above average, 3 average, 2 below average and 1 poor, 5% rated the process as being a 5, 19% a 4, 10% a 3, with 5% rating the process a 2, and 0% a 1. 62% of respondents left the question blank.

## **Comparison of Contract Renewal Overall Response**



Comments included:

*“Carole is wonderful to work with.”*

*“HUD needs to get their act in order to avoid unnecessary delays.”*

*“Train staff regarding restructure procedures.”*

## **Voucher Payments/Special Claims**

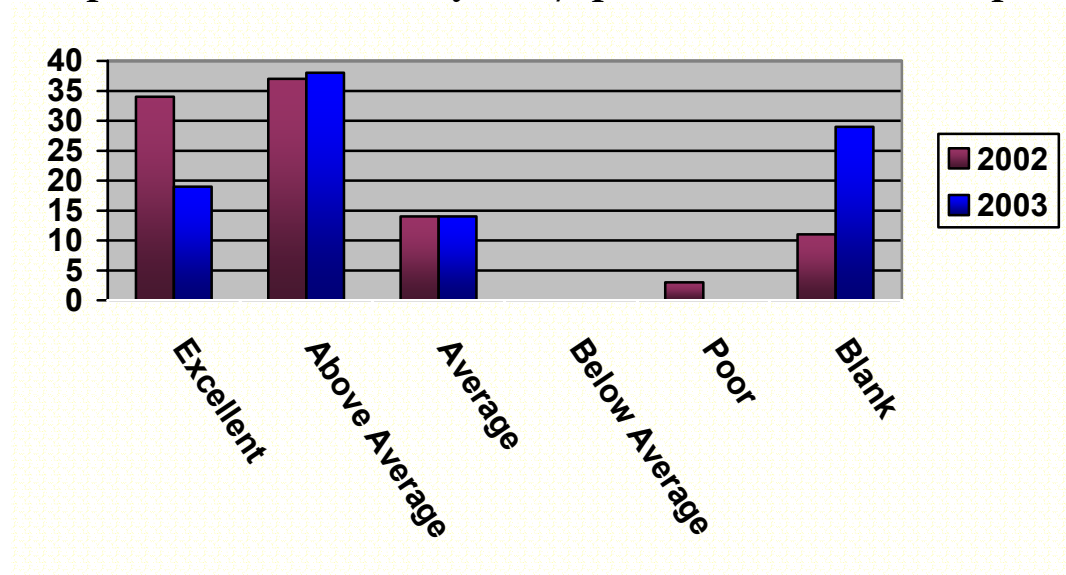
71% of respondents stated they requested a voucher/special claim in the last year. 19% said they had not submitted a voucher/special claim. 10% left the question unanswered.

67% of respondents believe the IFA budget staff is courteous and professional. 0% answered no to this question. 33% left the question blank.

62% of those responding stated the IFA budget staff is informed of current HUD regulations and able to answer questions appropriately. 5% answered no this question. 33% left the question blank.

The overall ranking system of 1 to 5 proved that 19% of respondents ranked the voucher payment process as excellent down from 34% in 2002, 38% thought the process was above average (37% in 2002), and 14% ranked the process as average. 0% believed the process was below average, and 0% thought the process was poor. 29% of respondents left the question unanswered.

### Comparison of Voucher Payment/Special Claim Overall Response



*Several comments were received regarding the voucher payment and special claim process: They include:*

*“Be sure special claims are signed before returning to owner/agent.”*

*“IFA sometimes answers questions before HUD. Provided answers to questions only as they so directed.”*

### **EPS, Inc.**

When asked if EPS, Inc., responded to calls within a reasonable time, 95% of respondents believed that EPS is responsive to phone calls. 0% answered no. 5% left this question blank.

90% of respondents believe the EPS staff is courteous and professional. 0% did not believe the EPS staff was courteous and professional. 10% left the question unanswered.

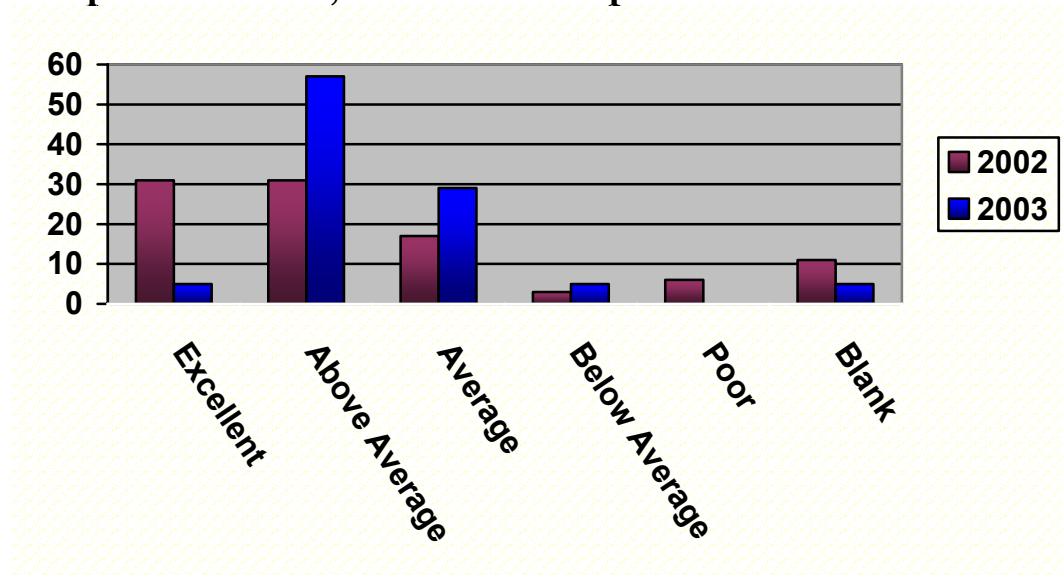
86% of respondents believe EPS is informed of current HUD regulations and were able to answer questions appropriately. 5% did not believe EPS was informed of current HUD regulations or able to answer questions. 10% left this question blank.

19% of respondents had accessed the EPS website. 76% had not. 5% left the question blank.

14% of those responding found the EPS website helpful. 86% chose not to answer the question.

Using the above named rating scale of 1 to 5, 5% of respondents ranked the voucher reconciliation/tracs process as excellent, 57% believe the process was above average, 29% felt the process is average. 5% rank the process as below average, and 0% ranked the process as poor. 5% of respondents left this question unanswered.

### Comparison of EPS, Inc. Overall Response



Comments or suggestions to improve the TRACS/voucher reconciliation process included:

*“Not always able to answer questions, and sometimes not in a timely manner.”*

*“If I have a problem EPS says it’s my software. My software provider says EPS isn’t transmitting what I send to them. Sometimes it doesn’t get resolved.*

*Changes are sometimes made with minimal explanation, and that could have waited until the next voucher.”*

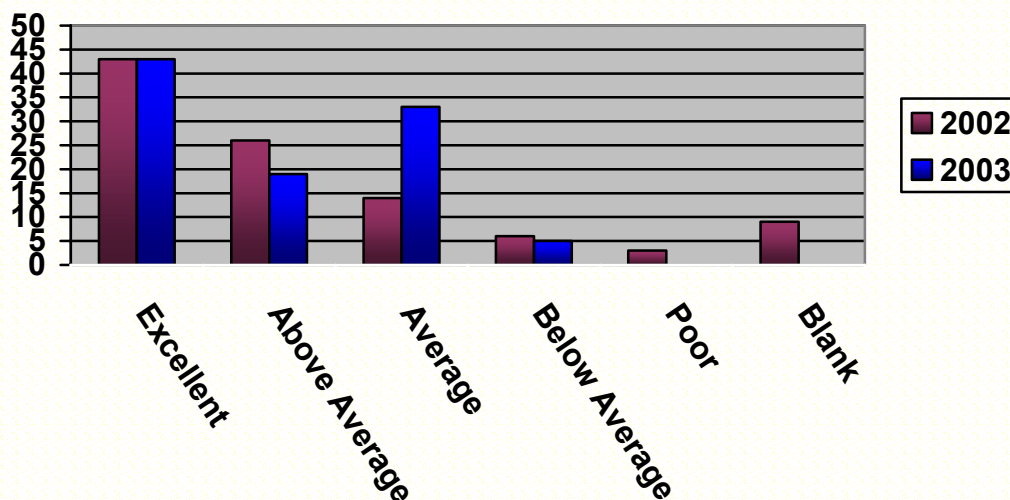
*“Appropriate answers depend on the person that answers the questions.”*

### Communication

90% of those responding state they have received a response to phone calls or correspondence within 2 business days. 10% do not feel they receive a response within a reasonable time frame.

The overall rating of response time proved that 43% thought response time was excellent (5). 19% ranked response time as above average (4). 33% believed response time was average. 5% labeled response time as below average, and 0% rated response time as poor.

## Comparison of Communication Overall Response



86% of those responding stated that had accessed the IFA website. 14% answered no.

76% of respondents stated the forms and documents available on the website have been helpful. 5% answered no. 19% left the question blank.

When asked about the management bulletins now available on the website, 71% found the bulletins helpful. 5% answered no. 24% left the question blank.

Comments regarding communication included:

*"Cell phones."*

Comments regarding the IFA website included:

*"Notification of anything new they may be looking for during a management review as soon as they know it."*

*"When I have accessed the website there was nothing new."*

*"Use a list serve to send general info by e-mail."*

*"Left message-never called back. Another time they said they would call back, but never did."*

*"Did not realize the bulletins were there. Will look for them in the future."*

## Training

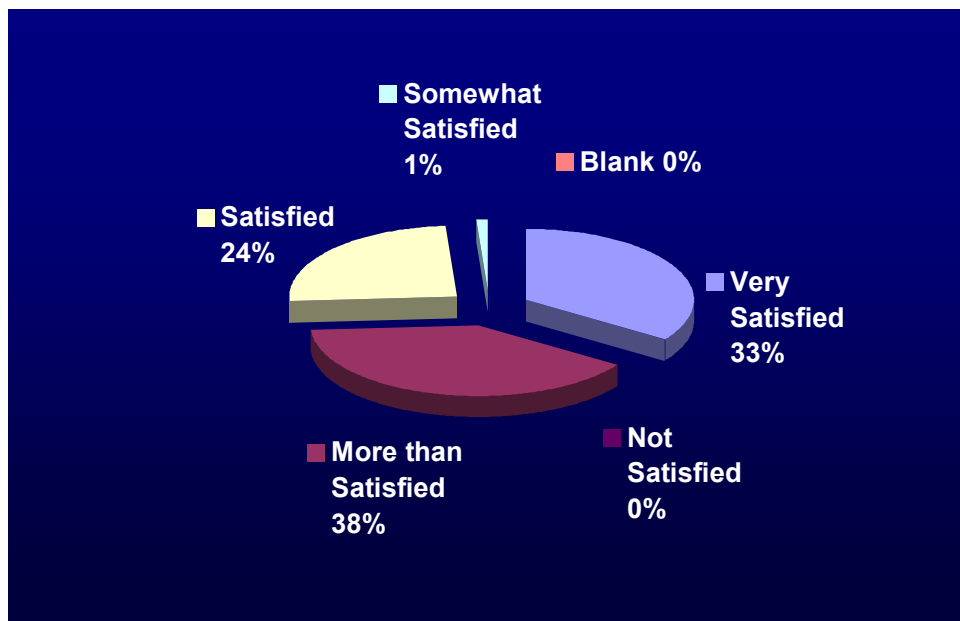
In the year 2003, in cooperation with Ia/Ne AHMA, IFA was able to provide one half day training on Tenant Rental Assistance Certification System (TRACS) and one full day of training on Occupancy and Handbook HUD 4350.3 Rev-1. Respondents were given choices for possible training topics. 56% of those responding requested budget-based rental increase training. 44% would like to receive training on contract renewal options and processes. 78% preferred special claims training. 11% selected the "other" category. When asked to specify, they stated "waivers." 43% left the question blank.



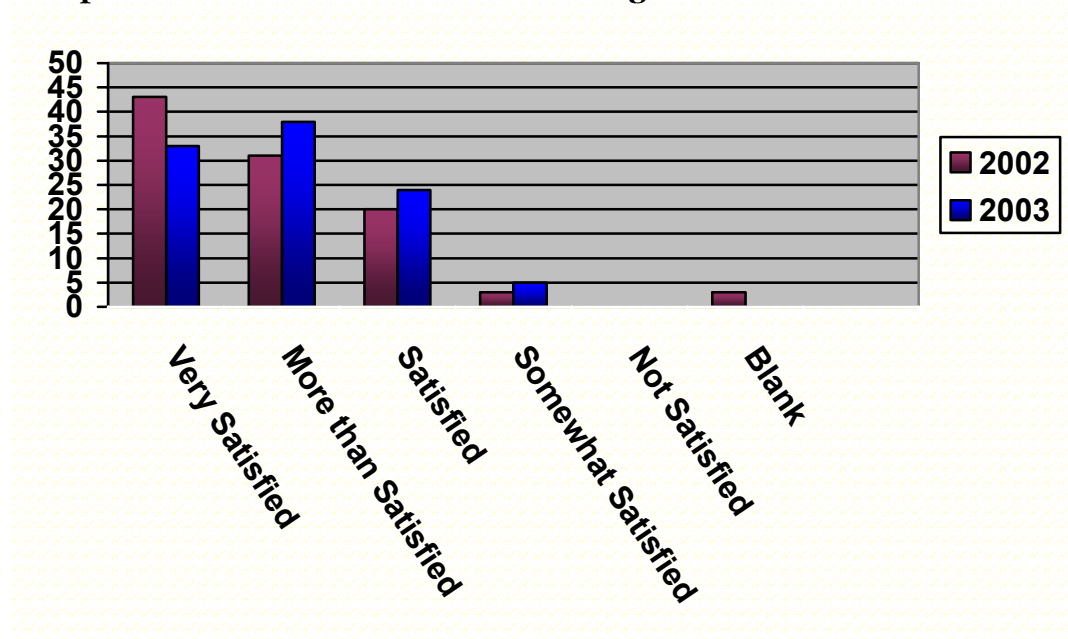
## Overall Satisfaction

When asked about overall satisfaction rate, 33% were very satisfied with IFA compared to 43% the previous year. 38% were more than satisfied (31% in 2002), 24% were satisfied (20% in 2002), 1% was somewhat satisfied compared to 3% in 2002, and 0% was not satisfied.

### Satisfaction Pie Chart



### Comparison of Overall Satisfaction Rating



Additional comments included:

*"Listen to the people who are in the field."*

*“More information on LIPRA.”*

*You are all wonderful. Thank you for all of your assistance.”*

## **Conclusion**

The HUD Handbook 4350.3, Occupancy Requirements of Subsidized Multifamily Housing Programs has recently undergone a complete re-write. While the industry welcomed the change, the issuance and implementation of this handbook has affected owner and management agent policy and procedure. Software issues, for both HUD and the owner/management agent, have not yet been resolved. IFA is required to enforce these changes, which does cause owners/management agents additional time and expense. This frustration was reflected in some of the comments received in the survey.

Management and occupancy reviews, and rental adjustments rates have remained fairly high.

Contract renewal funding has been extremely slow in the past year. While out of the control of IFA, it may affect owner/management agent satisfaction. The large number of blank responses also affected this year's ranking. The contract renewal team is extremely efficient and diligent in getting contracts to owners and management agents as soon as the funding is received. 24% of respondents believe the renewal process is above average or excellent. 62% did not answer the question.

Voucher payments/special claims remain stable when compared to previous year results. EPS, Inc. also continues to perform well.

Communication ranking also remained fairly stable. The majority of respondents had accessed the IFA website. This year the Section 8 division implemented “Management Bulletins”, which enables customers to access to new publications and regulations such as Fair Market Rents, Income Limits, etc. on the website rather than having to surf various HUD publications and websites. Regularly used forms and documents are also posted on the web. Most respondents found these items useful and informative. The division is currently in the process of updating the Contract Administration Tracking System to include e-mail. This will further enable the division to remain in contact with owners and management agents, as well as provide incentive for owners and management agents to keep IFA abreast of staff and e-mail changes.

A large percentage of respondents requested training. The training provided at the recent Ia/Ne AHMA conference was extremely well received. Customers seem to want and appreciate any training opportunity. Hopefully, the Section 8 division will be able to provide additional training in the upcoming year.

Results of the survey will be shared with staff and posted on the IFA website.

Overall, the results from this year's survey are excellent. Again, staff is to be commended on their performance in the last year. They have worked hard to provide our customer base with excellent service, consistent interpretation of HUD regulation, and technical assistance where necessary.